

# Reconnaissance Patrols in Baghdad

by First Lieutenant Gregory S. Hickerson

U.S. forces conduct reconnaissance patrols in Baghdad to identify subversive or enemy elements and determine how the local population will react toward the coalition. As a patrol leader, you will simultaneously conduct these two types of missions each time you lead a patrol. These missions are extremely important because they provide a clear picture, which commanders need to effectively plan and conduct future operations.

You must consider multiple aspects when identifying criminal activity. Identifying criminal activity includes having a good rapport with the locals in your area of responsibility (AOR), a good analysis of the latest intelligence on your AOR, properly conducted troop leading procedures (TLP), and a bit of luck. Focusing too much on any one of these aspects will leave you conducting a patrol with no specific task and purpose, versus a reconnaissance patrol with a definite task and purpose.

Establishing a good rapport is by far the most important ingredient to successful missions day after day. Dignity and re-

spect must be enforced throughout your unit at the lowest level. During initial contact with the locals in your AOR, it is very important to make a good impression. Leaders who have a good understanding of the culture and are open to these differences will ensure that the locals view soldiers as problem solvers, not as outsiders interfering with local disputes, especially in Muslim countries where working with the community involves interaction with both males and females, and knowing what is and is not taboo. Establishing trust and confidence snowballs in the tight-knit communities you will encounter in Iraq. Learning the local language and using it at every opportunity shows you are truly concerned. All leaders rely on interpreters to assist them in communicating, but you can gain a lot of goodwill by trying to make one-on-one contact and place a personal touch on what may seem to be a stressful time for both you and the local community.

As a leader, you should know your AOR better than anyone else, have contacts and informants throughout, and be easily rec-

ognized by the locals. If you are properly established in the area, you will be regarded as a sheriff; if not, you will be considered just another outsider. Most of the intelligence about the AOR is gathered and reported by your unit, but knowledge and analysis are two different things. Analysis of the latest intelligence will help you adjust your day-to-day missions.

During day-to-day missions, it is an easy trap to cut corners and forget TLPs, which in turn, cuts into your effectiveness as a leader and also detracts from unit effectiveness. To counter this trap, create and use tools that force the use of TLPs. For example, use patrol order templates at the lowest level, ensure subordinate leaders back brief the patrol plan, and that timelines include a patrol brief so all soldiers understand the mission. Commanders and platoon leaders should assign missions two to three days prior, giving subordinate leaders proper time to plan and rehearse.

Identifying the sentiment of the local population is something every commander needs to know and what every scout should







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provide. Sentiment of the local population dictates size and strength of patrols, unit posture during operations, and types of missions. Collecting this data is done everyday by each member of the scout patrol. It is as simple as waving at the locals and observing their reactions, and as tough as engaging a local in a heated discussion on topics that truly affect his living conditions such as electricity, water, garbage, and sewage. Listening to the problems with attention and concern makes a difference. As you patrol the streets, it is very easy to be distracted and over-

whelmed by the crowds. Focus on individuals and engage in one-on-one conversation.

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tractions out of the perimeter, while providing security for the entire dismounted area. The HUMINT team must establish a signal with the security team to designate individuals selected for intelligence gathering. By doing this, your security elements can focus on internal and external security and your HUMINT element can focus on effective questioning and conduct information gathering. Always use two-man teams on both the security team and HUMINT team, which provide additional safety and security of individual soldiers.

Planning your patrol should follow the eight TLP steps: receive the mission; issue the warning order; make a tentative plan; start movement; reconnoiter; complete the plan; issue the order; and supervise. Your plan should include the most recent intelligence and significant acts. As the enemy evolves and changes his tactics, you must adapt as well. Keep it simple, and focus time and energy on rehearsals and battle drills. Develop an effective plan that allows the most time and space available to complete the mission. Include flexibility in your patrols, which in turn allows subordinate leaders the most versatility while conducting TLPs. You should always plan maneuver that includes primary and alternate routes and vary these routes from patrol to patrol. Never develop a pattern of entrance or exit from built-up areas. Use all available avenues of approach and routes within your AOR.

You should conduct patrol briefs prior to each patrol that include all aspects of a traditional five-paragraph operation order (OPORD). The patrol brief can omit some parts of the OPORD, based on mission and timeline. At a minimum, it should include task organization, scheme of ma-



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neuver, task and purpose for each element, and coordinating instructions. Ensure you include safety-related information such as speed, rollover drills, and actions on contact. Patrols are an everyday event so each leader should develop a system to standardize planning and rehearsals that will make planning almost routine.

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During your patrols, conduct dismounted operations regularly to gather intelligence. Platoons should establish standing operating procedures (SOP) and rehearse these operations constantly. Dismount team organization should consist of two-man teams, including the security elements, HUMINT collection team with interpreter, and the team leader. It is very important to separate duties so that each member is focused on the mission. You should use either the box formation or the diamond formation. Movement techniques between mounted and dismounted elements vary based on terrain and mission, but should be limited to traveling overwatch and bounding overwatch. You should use bounding overwatch in heavily populated

areas or heavy traffic. The overwatch vehicle should include driver, gunner, and team leader.

Tactical questioning is a skill that leaders should practice and rehearse. The better leaders perform this skill, the more accurate gathered HUMINT will be and gathering time will be reduced. Again, remember leaders should have established a good rapport in the AOR and have already established multiple contacts and informants.

Focused questions should be conducted using brief, simple, clear questions that get direct answers, which will allow leaders to continue with follow-up direct questions. Avoid including negative words in the question. Other types of questions that you should avoid are leading, vague, or compound questions. Leading questions are questions that will only return a "yes" or "no." Vague questions, such as "what's going on" or "what's the problem," will return unrelated answers and lead the conversation to where the contact has control of the conversation. Compound questions will confuse the contact or allow the contact to give incomplete

responses. Again, compound questions allow the contact to take control of the conversation. Remember, you have to control the conversation at all times.

Sections and platoons conduct reconnaissance patrols in Baghdad daily. Understanding these two types of missions will increase your unit's effectiveness. Identifying subversive or enemy elements involves establishing a good rapport, analysis of the most recent intelligence, and properly conducted TLPs. Determining the sentiment of the local people includes watching reactions of the people, sound tactical questioning of the locals, and intelligence gathering.



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